



USAID
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MACEDONIA

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

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The refurbished main courtroom of the Basic Court in Stip.

USAID FOSTERS THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE LEGITIMATE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN MACEDONIA

- by helping local government increase its authority and become more accountable;
- by training citizens to participate in political and social decision making;
- by strengthening the independence of the judiciary and enhancing the Rule of Law; and
- by building representative and accountable government institutions.

For more information visit:
<http://macedonia.usaid.gov>

OVERVIEW

The Republic of Macedonia separated peacefully from Yugoslavia in 1991 but has not yet completed the political and economic reforms required for European integration. USAID supported Macedonia in its implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which brought the 2001 ethnic conflict to an end, by helping to enact the legal framework for decentralization to proceed; conduct peaceful and fair parliamentary elections in 2002; and facilitate an accurate and widely accepted national census. As Macedonia moves beyond the events of 2001, USAID's democracy assistance focuses increasingly on helping Macedonia prepare for EU and NATO accession by supporting reform of the judiciary and accountable government.

PROGRAMS

DECENTRALIZATION PROJECT

USAID's Decentralization Project provides critical support to the Government of Macedonia implement decentralization. USAID's "vocational" training for municipalities has prepared them to absorb new competencies like transparent budget management, tax administration, urban planning, and local economic development. 17 Municipal Citizen Information Centers have been opened making it easier for citizens to have contact with their local governments. Municipalities have also initiated public hearings to improve the communication with citizens. Over the next three years, USAID's Decentralization Project will assist municipalities to develop the capacity to successfully assume all new responsibilities under decentralization. It will also assist municipalities to adopt internet communication and other modern technologies that facilitate citizen participation and transparent municipal administration.

ELECTIONS, PARTIES, AND PARLIAMENT

Since 2001, the Political Party Support Project has provided training and consultations to help strengthen the internal democratic practices of the parties. It encourages meaningful dialogue between the leadership of the parties and their constituencies. The Project also encourages the parties to focus on the difficult economic challenges facing the country and to continue to play a constructive role between election cycles especially at the grass-roots level.

The Parliamentary Development Project has worked with the Macedonian National Assembly to introduce new democratic practices such as Public Hearings and Assembly open days. The project has also helped open constituency offices for 70 Members of Parliament-MPs creating opportunities for better contact between citizens and their representatives. The Project also introduced an internship program



Electoral Board 1019 in Kumanovo counts ballots in Macedonia's 2005t local elections.

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through which a politically and ethnically diverse group of students served as research assistants for MPs and committees. This program is now fully funded and managed by the Parliament itself.

RULE OF LAW

The Macedonia Court Modernization Project is helping Macedonia's judiciary develop into a more independent, accountable, and effective branch of government. The project works with the Ministry of Justice, Supreme Court, and other key legal institutions to strengthen the administrative capacity of the judiciary, and improve its ability to resolve legal disputes in an efficient, transparent, and timely manner. For this to be achieved, key laws including the Civil Procedure Law, the Law on Enforcement, and the Law on Courts must be reformed—USAID is helping to make this happen. Through its work in ten pilot courts, the project is implementing strategies to reduce case backlogs, increase disposition rates, and improve access to and accountability of the courts. To date, this project has reduced the backlog of year-old cases by 6% and three-year-old cases by 38%.

USAID's Rule of Law Project is providing technical and financial assistance to long-term Roma residents of Macedonia to help them become naturalized citizens of Macedonia. USAID has helped over 1000 individuals and their families apply for citizenship. Citizenship is a critical first step toward the integration of the Roma people into Macedonian society and brings with it immediate social and economic benefits, including access to healthcare, education, and social services.

CIVIL SOCIETY

The Labor Union Project works with progressive and reform-minded unions to build a stronger labor movement in Macedonia. The project focuses on the development of democratic and multi-ethnic labor unions that effectively advocate on behalf of workers and their rights. The project promotes competitiveness through the introduction of modern labor-management relations' practices at the enterprise level, and encourages social dialogue and true partnerships between government, management, and labor unions as a means for achieving consensus, reducing conflict, and building broader public support for the economic/political transition.

USAID's Community Self-Help Initiative (CSHI), which closed in September 2005, has implemented more than 350 projects identified by local communities as high priority, such as school repairs, water supply systems and city parks, and provided sustainable benefits to citizens and practical training in local cooperation. More than 75% of Macedonia's citizens benefited from CSHI. Equally as important- those that became involved with their communities' development stayed involved- as the community groups that formed to carry out the CSHI projects continue to be active in their communities today.

The new Civil Society Strengthening Project will help build the capacity of Macedonian NGOs to represent citizens' interests, advocate for public reform, build partnerships with Macedonian public and private sectors, and deliver needed social services where the State is absent.